

# Art in America



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FINE ARTS  
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Cole: The Titan's Goblet  
*Metropolitan Museum of Art*

Devoted to Research in American Art



## CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

CHARLOTTE BUEL JOHNSON, Museum Instructor at the Worcester Art Museum, has taught art history at Hollins College, Virginia, and was in charge of the art program at Maryville College, Tennessee.

EVELYN L. SCHMITT, graduate student in American literature and art at Columbia University.

MABEL MUNSON SWAN, author of "The Athenaeum Gallery," and of books and articles on antiques and historical subjects.

WILLIAM L. WARREN, formerly Assistant Director of the Federal Art Project in Connecticut and Director of the Index of American Design for four years. He has specialized in Connecticut art and history. His first article on Richard Brunton appeared in the April, 1951, issue of ART IN AMERICA.

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*John Marshall Phillips, Director of the Yale University Art Gallery and a member of our Editorial Board, died suddenly on May 7th. He had given the magazine his time and advice most generously for years, and on the day he died had come to New York for a special editorial meeting. As always, on that day, his suggestions were practical and valuable. His death is an irreparable loss to all his friends, and to ART IN AMERICA.*



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## Two American Romantics—Thomas Cole and William Cullen Bryant

By EVELYN L. SCHMITT  
New York City

THE comparison of nature as it appears in the work of the two early American romantics, Cole and Bryant, makes possible a broader view of the characteristics of romanticism in America than can be gained from a study of an artist or writer alone. Each of these men was the first in his field to specialize in nature and to bring to it the attitude of the new romantic movement, a movement which had reached its middle state of development in Europe at this time but was completely new to America. Bryant's birth in 1795 and Cole's in 1801 make them almost exact contemporaries, and though Cole died many years before Bryant, the most important of their works were done in the years from the publishing of "Thanatopsis" in 1821 and Cole's arrival in New York in 1825, to Cole's early death in 1848. In New York they moved in the same circle. One of the earliest of Bryant's New York experiences mentioned by Parke Godwin, his friend and biographer, is that at the houses of Henry and Robert Sedgwick he met "Cole, the landscape painter, in the early promise of his genius."<sup>1</sup> They belonged to the same literary groups, The Bread and Cheese and The Sketch Club. That they knew each other's work well is apparent from a comparison of their remarks on the Catskill Falls with their almost identical descriptions of the "ice palace," or Cole's description in his journal of the thunderstorm in the mountains with Bryant's poem on the hurricane. Bryant's concern with Cole as one sharing his own interest in and attitude toward nature appears in his sonnet "To Cole, the Painter, Departing for Europe," where he fears Cole will return with his attitude changed by what he sees there and cautions him to "keep that earlier, wilder image bright."

The American romantic approaching nature had a considerable advantage over his European counterpart. The ultimate source for the romantic movement is the cult of the primitive as first set forth by Rousseau. For the people of the long civilized Europe this could only mean an escape into the past. In Europe the glorification of a country's past meant the glorification of something already in ruins. For the American, however, the primitive remained unspoiled in the present. America's past was contained in

<sup>1</sup>Godwin, Parke, "A Biography of William Cullen Bryant," D. Appleton and Co., New York 1883, page 209.

her landscape. It was this which must be glorified to give her a past equal to that of any country in Europe. Both Bryant and Cole emphasized the more primitive, unspoiled character of American landscape when compared with European as a point of American superiority. Bryant, in his funeral oration on Cole, spoke of Cole's "pictures which carried the eye over scenes of wild grandeur peculiar to our country, over our aerial mountain-tops with their mighty growth of forest never touched by the axe, along the banks of streams never deformed by culture . . ."<sup>2</sup> In the preface he wrote for "Picturesque America" Bryant sees America as a paradise for the landscape painter, for "Art sighs to carry her conquests into new realms. On our continent, and within the limits of our Republic, she finds them — primitive forests, in which the huge trunks of a past generation of trees lie mouldering in the shade of their aged descendants; mountains and valleys, gorges and rivers, and tracts of seacoast, which the foot of the artist has never trod; and glens murmuring with water-falls which his ear has never heard."<sup>3</sup> Cole found this same attraction in American scenery for he says, "All nature here is new to art. No Tivolis, Mount Blancs, Plinlimmons, hackneyed and worn by the daily pencils of hundreds; but primeval forests, virgin lakes and waterfalls."<sup>4</sup>

This peculiar freshness of American scenery led to another characteristic in the landscape of both poet and painter: a tendency to less introspection and more direct observation. There was, as yet, no standard style for American Romantic work — no generally accepted subjects and symbols. Cole and Bryant were faced with the problem of creating new means for communicating a new attitude. Bryant insisted that each man must observe nature for himself. In a letter to his brother he chides him for writing about a bird he had never seen: " . . . let me counsel you to draw your own images, in describing Nature, from what you observe around you . . . The skylark is an English bird, and an American who has never visited Europe has no right to be in raptures about it."<sup>5</sup> Bryant never deviated from this standard into producing a landscape from his imagination. Even the fanciful tale that is the basis of his poem on the Catskill Falls is set in a personally observed landscape. Cole also followed this pat-

<sup>2</sup>Bryant, William Cullen, "A Funeral Oration Occasioned by the Death of Thomas Cole," D. Appleton and Co., New York 1848.

<sup>3</sup>Bryant, William Cullen, "Picturesque America," Preface, D. Appleton and Co., New York, 1872.

<sup>4</sup>Noble, Louis L., "The Life and Works of Thomas Cole," Cornish Lamport and Co., New York 1853, page 202.

<sup>5</sup>Godwin, Parke, "A Biography of William Cullen Bryant," pp. 281-2.



Fig. 1. Cole: Ox-Bow of the Connecticut  
*Metropolitan Museum of Art*

tern in his American landscapes even to the inclusion of the small details typical of such close observation. When he painted scenes of Europe, however, he adopted the standard symbols of European Romanticism, painting the accepted stark mountain scenery and crumbling ruins. These same stark mountains appear in the fanciful landscapes of his allegorical pieces.

The main stream of the American Romantic movement followed a mild philosophical course through Bryant and Emerson. Such extremists as Poe were appreciated more in France than in our own country. When Bryant speaks of wild nature he means uncivilized nature rather than stormy and rugged nature, for the thing he mentions most often as a mark of superiority in our mountains over those of Europe is that ours are "wooded to the top" and he cries out in "The Forest Hymn"

Oh, from these sterner aspects of thy face  
 Spare me and mine, nor let us need the wrath  
 Of the mad, unchained elements to teach  
 Who rules them.

The opening lines of "Monument Mountain" in which Bryant describes his setting might be a description of Cole's 1836 *Ox-Bow of the Connecticut*



(Fig. 1) had it not been written ten years earlier; and a comparison of these two works will reveal most of those views which Cole and Bryant held in common. The following are the first twenty lines, those that paint the landscape, of Bryant's poem:

Thou who wouldst see the lovely and the wild  
Mingled in harmony on Nature's face,  
Ascend our rocky mountains. Let thy foot  
Fail not with weariness, for on their tops  
The beauty and the majesty of earth,  
Spread wide beneath, shall make thee to forget  
The steep and toilsome way. There, as thou stand'st,  
The haunts of men below thee, and around  
The mountain-summits, thy expanding heart  
Shall feel a kindred with that loftier world  
To which thou art translated, and partake  
The enlargement of thy vision. Thou shalt look  
Upon the green and rolling forest-tops,  
And down into the secrets of the glens  
And streams that with their bordering thickets strive  
To hide their windings. Thou shalt gaze, at once,  
Here on white villages, and tilth, and herds,  
And swarming roads, and there on solitudes  
That only hear the torrent, and the wind,  
And eagle's shriek . . .

The *Ox-Bow* contains the same elements seen from the same view. It is a view seen from the top of the mountain on the left, of the "taunts of men below" and surrounded by the "mountain-summits," looking down on "the green and rolling forest-tops," "the glens," the stream with its "bordering thicket," and the "white village." It is this mingling of the "lovely and the wild," seeing nature as a harmony with a peaceful calming relationship to men that is the dominant attitude in Bryant's work and Cole's work of the type of the *Ox-Bow*.

In the "Inscription for the Entrance to a Wood" Bryant finds the "wild wood" a place of escape for those who are tired of the evils of the world where "The calm shade shall bring a kindred calm" to the sufferer. The trees "partake the deep contentment" and "breathe a fixed tranquillity." Again in "A Forest Hymn" he tells us that "the passions," virtue's enemies, "shrink and tremble and are still" in the presence of nature's solitudes. It is in this same poem that he makes the plea quoted above that he be spared from the "unchained elements." Here, on the other hand, is Cole's description of a thunderstorm he encountered in the woods: "the deep gorge be-



Fig. 2. Cole: Expulsion from the Garden of Eden  
M. and M. Karolik Collection; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

low me grew darker, and the gloom more awful: terrific clouds gathered in their black wings, upon the hollow hushed abyss, closer and closer. Expectation hung on every crag. I was wrapped in the folds of the tempest, blinded to every prospect beyond the rugged doorway of the cave. Then came up a thousand fancies. I thought myself careering in a chariot of rock through airy wastes, beyond the reach of gravitation, with no law but my own will. I felt as feeble as a child. Every moment my situation was becoming more comfortless as well as romantic."<sup>6</sup> Here is Cole revelling in being at the mercy of the "unchained elements." This is the other, the wilder, side of romanticism — the side not typical of the main stream of American Romanticism but which existed with great vigor in Europe in such figures as Byron. The approaching storm appears often in Cole's work and in those paintings which use landscapes from his own imagination as *The Voyage of Life*, *The Titan's Goblet* (Cover), and *The Expulsion from the Garden* (Fig. 2) the mountains are rugged and bare and the other elements tend to be exotic.

<sup>6</sup>Quoted from Cole's journals in "The Catskill Mountains and the Regions Around," by Charles Rockwell, Taintor Brothers and Co., New York 1867, page 272.





Fig. 3. Cole: The Catskill Mountains  
*Hinman B. Hurlbut Collection, Cleveland Museum of Art*

The Romantic's great regard for nature involves his belief that it is somehow closer to God than man has become and that the spirit of God is somehow contained in it. American Romanticism typically sees God in nature on two levels: one on which the spirit of God dwells in nature and affects man through a general inspiration and uplifting; the other sees particular lessons of God's intentions for daily conduct in the details of nature. The first level is typical of all Romantic thought while the second is typical only of Romantic thought in America and is a holdover from the Puritan habit of allegorizing nature to discover God's will. Bryant and Cole share these two attitudes equally. Said Cole, "I am not a mere leaf-painter. I have higher conceptions than a mere combination of inanimate, uninformed nature."<sup>7</sup> When he painted pure landscape his object was to recreate the inspirational effect of nature itself (see Fig. 3). When he painted *The Voyage of Life*, however, he was allegorizing in the New England tradition, for in the long course of the river with its various difficulties he sees a pattern of man's own life, with the lesson that we, like the river, must not allow difficulty to keep us from our final goal. Bryant, too, saw this lesson in the river and wrote it into his poem "The Stream of Life." That Bryant

<sup>7</sup>Noble, Louis L., "The Life and Works of Thomas Cole," page 263.



Fig. 4. Cole: The Valley of Vanclose  
*Metropolitan Museum of Art*

saw that there were two levels on which to observe nature, he tells us in these lines on his observations:

... Each brought, in turn,  
Some truth, some lesson on the life of man,  
Or recognition of the Eternal mind  
Who veils his glory with the elements.

The thought of "A Forest Hymn" is that God can be better found in nature than in the haunts of men. "The groves were God's first temples" where the "sacred influences" of nature filled primitive man with "the thought of boundless power and inaccessible majesty." This idea enters into the lines from "Monument Mountain" quoted above:

. . . thy expanding heart  
Shall feel a kindred with that loftier world  
To which thou art translated, and partake  
The enlargement of thy vision.

On the other hand, a great many of his poems draw allegorical lessons from nature. Two of his most famous, "The Yellow Violet" and "To a Water Fowl" are of this type. From the first he learns not to forget his old friends as he progresses to a higher position in the world in the way he has forgotten the violet among the flowers of summer. In the same way he takes from the flight of the waterfowl the lesson that

He who, from zone to zone,  
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,  
In the long way that I must tread alone,  
Will lead my steps aright.

Bryant and Cole saw the same power in nature and had the same high object of reproducing it through their art. It is mainly Cole's additional love of nature in its harsh and stormy aspects that differentiates the two. Cole seems to have felt more the influence of Europe (see Fig. 4), which is not remarkable when it is considered that he not only made two visits there in his later years but spent the first sixteen years of his life there. Their equal interest in the celebrating of the American landscape is clear. Even as Cole was the first notable painter of American landscapes, Bryant has been called "the first notable painter of landscapes among the American poets."<sup>8</sup> In the year after Cole's death Asher B. Durand thought it the most fitting memorial to him to picture him with Bryant as *Kindred Spirits*, deep in the woods, surrounded by the unspoiled American scenery.

<sup>8</sup>McDowell, Tremaine, "William Cullen Bryant," American Book Co., New York 1935, page xxxv.

## Richard Brunton

By WILLIAM L. WARREN  
*Litchfield, Connecticut*

IN THE April, 1951, issue of *ART IN AMERICA*, in an article entitled "Richard Brunton, Itinerant Craftsman," the work of Brunton that had been identified since Albert C. Bates' book, "An Early Connecticut Engraver and his Work," appeared in 1909, was illustrated and discussed. It seemed then that Brunton was at least holding his own among his contemporaries, and that only time would tell more of his history. Several of his interesting and original pieces could not be included in the article, and since it appeared some additional material has been found. It has seemed appropriate therefore, to continue the discussion of Brunton at this time.

The Family Register illustrated in Fig. 1 was recently brought to the author's attention by the owner, Nina Fletcher Little. It is an important engraving as it contains nearly all of Brunton's characteristics and at the bottom in the center is a circle with the initials "R B." This Register is very similar to the one, unsigned, illustrated as Fig. 2 in the first article which was used as the touchstone for comparison and identification, but only after it had been proved that it was his work. But this engraving needs no proof. It contains a greater wealth of Brunton detail as well as being initialed and quite logically should now be the touchstone.

Moses and Susanna Coffin, whose Register this was, were New Hampshire people who lived in Boscawen, where all eight children were born. If one studies the script, it will be seen that the first four names are all done in the same hand and their names look as if they had been put down at the same time. The fourth child, Judith H. Coffin, was born in 1810, so it may be assumed, then, that Mr. and Mrs. Coffin may have had four children when they bought this Register and immediately set the facts down. There is no evidence that Mr. Coffin ever went very far from his town and they probably bought this from the itinerant craftsman himself. It is not known whether Brunton went to New Hampshire or not but as the first record on this Register is 1804, it may very well be that he did travel in that state; as it is the period from 1803 to 1810 for which nothing is known about him, and this Register from Boscawen may lead to disclosing more about this elusive character.

Richard Brunton did a bookplate for John Foot of Canton, Connecticut,

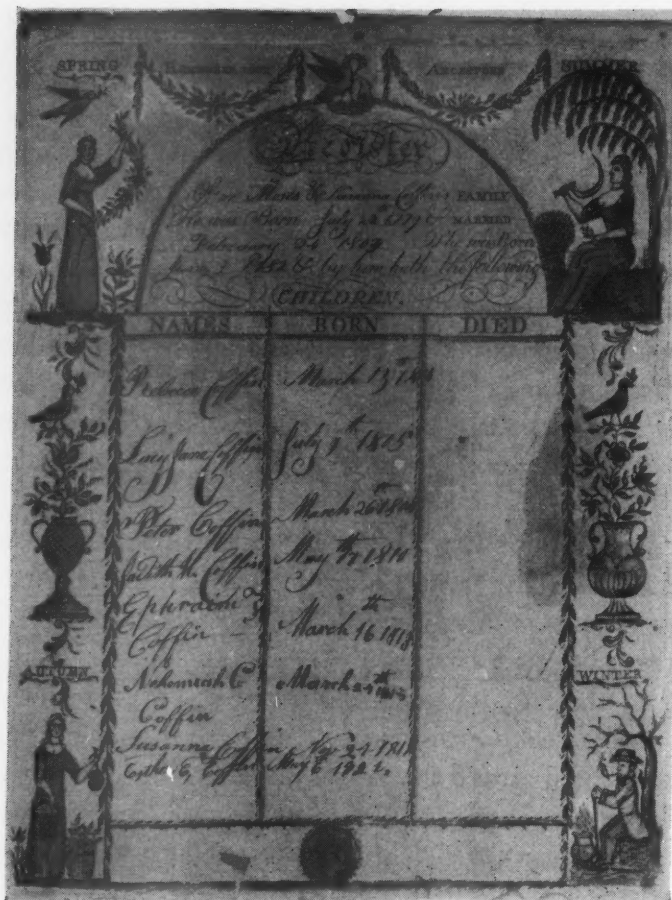


Fig. 1. Coffin Family Register. Engraved by Richard Brunton  
Nina Fletcher Little, Brookline, Mass.

and a silver *memento mori*, both probably done in 1803, as Mrs. Foot died in December 1802 and her husband six months later. The bookplate has already been illustrated but the *memento mori*, Figure 2, is here shown for the first time. It measures  $1\frac{1}{16}$  inches by  $2\frac{1}{16}$  inches and through the eye in the top there is a wide piece of the original black silk mourning ribbon.

It is known that Brunton turned his skill to several uses. He engraved upon silver spoons and did clock faces for the Hartford silversmith and clock maker, Jacob Sargeant, for whom he did a bookplate. The Groton Historical Society in Groton, Massachusetts, owns an interesting woodcut which was designed and carved by Brunton. Mrs. Mary Williams Shattuck, who gave this to the Society, stated: "Wood cut used in stamping



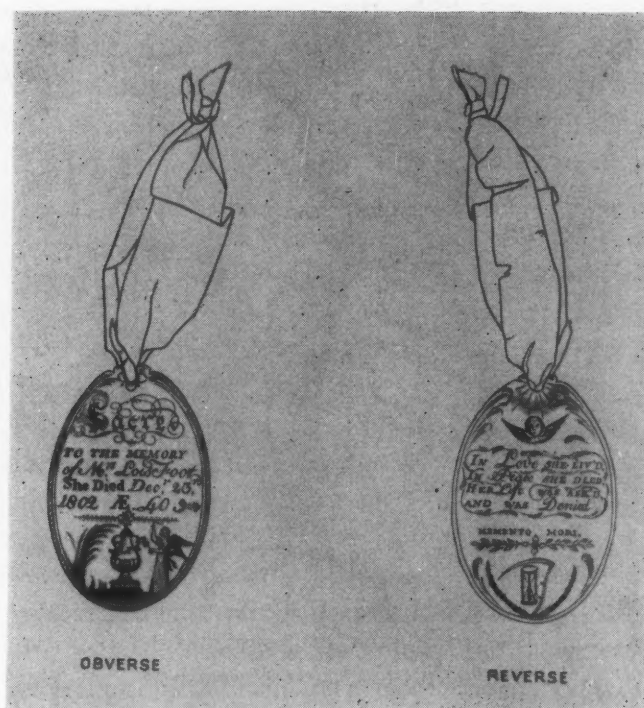


Fig. 2. Silver memento mori piece made by Richard Brunton  
*Mrs. George H. Decker, Watertown, Connecticut*  
 (Photograph Courtesy of the Index of American Design)

cloth in olden times. Carved by Richard Brunton in Revolutionary times. Deserted his army, remaining here many years. Finally supported by the town. He was a man of great ingenuity and skill, a fine engraver of silver and an adept at making counterfeit money." It so often happens that information of this sort is misleading, but to date this has proved sound. Brunton probably did desert the British Army and he lived in Groton for some years. The town records prove that he was dependent upon the town for charity and it was in Groton that he died in 1832. He certainly was a counterfeiter and spent two years at Newgate Prison. As for the wood cut the bird has the same cocky, black round eye, the same body shape and long tail that are similar to the one in the John Foot bookplate. He merely elongated the neck, turned the head and added a few touches, such as the crest. This block, of which Fig. 3 is an impression, shows another craft in which he worked, and if the information is correct it may be one of the earliest of Brunton's work. It looks as if Brunton went to Groton just after the Revolution for he did two bookplates for men who lived there



Fig. 3. Impression of a woodcut carved and designed by  
Richard Brunton for printing textiles  
*Groton Historical Society, Groton, Mass.*

and who were gone by the time Brunton returned to Groton sometime after 1810.

The Groton Historical Society also has an example of Brunton's work which at this time is the last thing we know he did. Fig. 4 shows a *memento mori*, a water color, on paper that has browned with age. It was done sometime after August 13, 1816, for John Lawrence, one of the children recorded, died on this date. This was given to the Groton Historical Society in 1902 by a sister of the two deceased children. She herself died at the age of 105 years in the twenties. It is not unlikely that she knew Brunton when she was a child. At first glance this water color resembles many of the early nineteenth-century mourning pictures but on closer examination Brunton's handiwork reveals itself. The small tree with stiff branches reaching up at an angle from the trunk is similar to those in the hunting scene in the Newgate Prison picture (*ART IN AMERICA*, April 1951, Fig. 4, p. 87). The slim girl, head in full face, body slightly turned and arms gesturing for the beholder, the urn, the plump bird with primitive eye, the scrollwork on the borders and the lettering, all these may be found repeatedly in these works of Brunton. If one is still uncertain, one needs only to turn the picture over. The water color is backed by a pine panel on which



is a crude and slapdash oil portrait under which is written "Richard Brunton." It is a curiosity, hardly even a caricature. Is it Brunton's own work or done by someone who dashed it off in a hurry? One can only make futile guesses as there is no story or explanation in the Society records.

The last original work to be discussed and the latest to be found is Fig. 5, a bookplate made for Major Reuben Humphreys, which adds another engraving to the eight that we know Brunton did for the various members of this family. It closely resembles the Henry Case bookplate (Bates, page 8) and is even more elaborate though it is not quite as large, measuring  $2\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$  inches. All Brunton's characteristics are at once apparent from the scrollwork, the small square open letters combined with the flourishing bold script, the mantelling with spaces filled by hatched lines with dots in the center, to the rosettes and leaves and the flowing ribbon at the base of the shield with a motto "Discern Right & Defend it." The name, "Reuben Humphreys Esq," with a date "AD 1799" appears below the coat of arms. A griffon is mounted on the top with three griffon heads in the shield. Brunton did a brass plate portrait of Reuben Humphreys, (ART IN AMERICA, April, 1951, Fig. 5, p. 89) under which appears this same coat of arms with an entirely different embellishment of a more original type, all symbols of war. This plate was initialed "R B" in the right hand lower corner. The date definitely places this at the time of Brunton's imprisonment at Newgate. On the reverse is the following inscription written in ink:

*Explanation*  
 (tear) e, beareth, Or:  
 charged with three Griffens  
 Heads, erect—:—:—Gules  
 over all a Crescent  
 — — argent— : —  
 crest  
 A Griffen passant—:—Gules  
 —  
 Motto  
 Discern Right & Defend it—  
 By the name of  
 Humphreys—

The script is probably contemporary, as the "s" is the long type that looks like "f." Richard Brunton's heraldry is strictly of his own invention, some amusingly original but for the most part made up to look enough like English coats of arms to be flattering to the head of the family. Now it is a mark of distinction to be of a family which had a bookplate designed



Fig. 4. *Memento mori*. Water color by Richard Brunton  
Groton Historical Society, Groton, Mass.

by Brunton! He must have had some rudimentary knowledge of heraldry or had some book from which he copied such things as animals rampant, castles, fleur de lys, unicorns and towers, but he must have been ignorant of the marshalling of arms and blazonry. He simply made shields, crests, etc., adding the emblems as he liked and decorating them with mantelling and escutcheons.

The author was delighted to discover what he thought was another Family Register by Richard Brunton in Carl Drepperd's "American Pioneer Arts and Artists," a work of somewhat bolder design but containing many of the Brunton details. Yet it was labelled as being the work of Mrs. Eunice Pinney of Simsbury, Connecticut. The reproduction was small



Fig. 5. Bookplate of Major Reuben Humphreys.  
Engraved by Richard Brunton  
*William L. Warren, Litchfield, Conn.*

and the details indistinct but the name of Pinney was clearly evident on the picture itself. It was a puzzle and a challenge. The top part and small details certainly looked like Brunton's work but the large female figures were disturbingly unlike his work. Could Brunton and Mrs. Pinney have collaborated? Brunton was certainly in and around Simsbury and did work for people in neighboring towns; they could have done work at the same time.

Through the kindness of Jean Lipman, the owner of the Register, a water color, Fig. 6, was located — owned by Nina Fletcher Little who had called attention to the Family Register, Fig. 1, which she had acquired be-



Fig. 6. Pinney Family Register. Water color by Eunice Pinney of Windsor, Connecticut, after Richard Brunton  
*Nina Fletcher Little, Brookline, Mass.*

cause she thought it so closely resembled the Pinney Register. The originals have all been carefully examined and compared and the conclusions are as follows. There is no doubt in anyone's mind that Eunice Pinney was the artist who did the Pinney Family Register. As Jean Lipman has stated in her article on Mrs. Pinney in "Primitive Painters in America — 1750-1950," Eunice Pinney adapted from English engravings and anything that appealed to her, as, for example, the Brunton Register. She copied and changed and added to suit herself. While much of this Register looks like Brunton, one familiar with their work can see at once that Eunice Pinney's drawing is not like Brunton's. Where Brunton used lines and cross hatchings in shadows or to show contours, she simply put on a broad wash with a brush. Brunton was an engraver and Mrs. Pinney a



Fig. 7. Family Register. Water color by Lucy King  
of Suffield, Connecticut

*Constance R. and Thomas D. Williams, Litchfield, Conn.*

water colorist. The most obvious dissimilarities can be seen in the flourishing "R" of the word "Register." Brunton's "R" in Fig. 1 is a carefully controlled series of lines, whereas Eunice Pinney's "R" is a not so controlled series of brush strokes, some running into each other.

It is not known from which of Brunton's works Mrs. Pinney adopted her Register. The figures of Hope and Charity she must have found somewhere else. Any connection of the two, as instructor and pupil, or just acquaintances is pure conjecture, but the date, the locale, and the evident familiarity of Mrs. Pinney with Brunton's work, all tend to make this seem a possibility.



In Fig. 6 we have another original water color that is surely a copy of the same Register that Mrs. Pinney used. It was done by Miss Lucy King Norton of Suffield, Connecticut, in whose attic it was found by the present occupant of the Norton House, Mrs. Frances Edwards. The figures are so close to Brunton's originals that she may have traced them and made small changes to suit her fancy or to make things easier. They are more in the spirit of Brunton than are Mrs. Pinney's copies. Brunton is known to have lived some time in Suffield at the home of Gad Rose, for whom he did a bookplate, and it is perfectly possible that he may have instructed Miss Norton. The lettering is too carelessly done to be Brunton's. The lines, used to indicate contours and shading, such as in the dresses and on the birds and urns, are put on with no knowledge of their function. None the less this and the Pinney water color are engaging pictures.

From these two recently discovered water colors it may be assumed that they were copied from a lost original, not a great deal different from Figs. 1 and 2 in the previous article. This brings to three the total number of large engravings of Family Registers that Brunton did. In the early history of American art there has been little evidence of any influence of style, technique or personality of an artist on his contemporaries or succeeding artists, but this has been due largely to insufficient research. In the field of portraiture, for instance, Nina Fletcher Little's work on the Connecticut limner, Winthrop Chandler (*ART IN AMERICA*, April, 1947), brought an obscure artist into focus; and we find that there is distinct stylistic evidence of an early Copley influence. And now in a smaller field we find that such an obscure itinerant as Richard Brunton made a distinct impression on two rural primitive artists, Eunice Pinney and Elizabeth Norton. No doubt in time we will learn more. After all it wasn't too long ago that we knew nothing about any of the three.

## The European Tradition and Alvan Fisher

By CHARLOTTE BUEL JOHNSON  
Worcester, Massachusetts

IT CAN be said that the style of Alvan Fisher (1792-1863) is truly American; and, at its peak, it is a reflection of nineteenth-century Romanticism. Yet, there are several instances where the artist, especially in his youth, looked to European masters for direct help. This is not surprising, since, except for brief training with John Ritto Penniman of Boston, Fisher was self-taught. The early compositions suggest that the artist drew heavily from some sort of European material such as the then popular drawing books and reproductive engravings, or even from paintings in private collections.

Fisher began painting on panels as did many in deference to European custom. More significant is the evidence of composition and subject. *The Fire-guard*, 1813, (Fig. 1) is striking in its resemblance to *An Italian Landscape* by Nicholas Berchem (Fig. 2), and, because of the many descriptive details, also suggests such aid as Joshua Bryant's "Series of Lessons on Landscape."<sup>1</sup> The genre painters of the Netherlands were popular in America, and, in addition, their type of subject suited Fisher's taste. Moreover, in 1825, one of his sketch-books contains notes after Berchem, much as if Fisher, having admired this master, looked him up when in Europe.

In 1816, Fisher painted the *Watering Place*, (Fig. 3), and it or a similar composition, inspired John Neal to comment on a resemblance to Cuyp's style.<sup>2</sup> Drawing books apparently provided the necessary details for the foreground, and the composition is an amalgamation of European traits drawn from more than one source.

Even the little panel, *Bellows Falls, Vermont*, 1817 (Fig. 4), which obviously profited from Fisher's own landscape sketching, is not free from influence. This time it was Gainsborough,<sup>3</sup> or the French, to whom Fisher looked.

Shortly after this, in 1820, Fisher's *Watercolor Sketch of Niagara Falls in the Moonlight* (Fig. 5), presents a lively and interesting scene. While arrangement and figures are purely Fisher's, the concern with rendering moonlight recalls the Englishman John Heaveside's "A Practical Essay on

<sup>1</sup>See Volume II, 1812, No. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Neal, John, "Three days in Boston," in "The Yankee," I (Dec. 10, 1828) 396-399.

<sup>3</sup>See Woodall, "Gainsborough's Landscape Drawing," pl. 78.





Fig. 1. Alvan Fisher: *Fire-guard*. Signed and dated 1813  
*Mrs. Sumner Brown, Dedham, Mass.*

the *Art of Coloring and Painting Landscapes with Watercolor*," 1807. Plate VIII (Fig. 6)<sup>4</sup> of this volume illustrates the rendering of moonlight in a manner similar to that used by Fisher.

As late as 1828, the influence of the drawing books persists in Fisher's paintings. "Francia's Progressive Lessons Tending to Elucidate the Character of Trees," or an engraving after Ruisdael (Fig. 7), may well have contributed to the atmospheric trees in Fisher's very Romantic canvas, *Man's Best Friend* (Fig. 8).

It is not so easy to illustrate conclusively the resemblance to Swiss nineteenth-century painters found in Fisher's *Mountain Scenery with Goats and Traveller's*, 1840 (Fig. 9). The delicacy of the trees, the expansive composition, and the emphasis on nature all hint that he knew the work of Alexandre Calame, or of Karl Bodmer who came to America in 1836.

From the sketch books, we find proof of Fisher's interest in Rembrandt's style. More than that, he made at least one copy after Rembrandt at the Louvre which was exhibited first in 1831 at the Boston Athenaeum (no. 128). In "The North American Review" there was a note of commendation concerning Fisher's copies after Rembrandt and Van Dyck which,

<sup>4</sup>Heaveside, John, "A Practical Essay on the Art of Coloring and Painting Landscapes with Watercolor," 1807, pl. VIII.



Fig. 2. Nicholas Berchem: Italian Landscape  
*Alte Pinakothek, Munich*



Fig. 3. Alvan Fisher: Watering Place. Signed and dated 1816  
*Clara E. Sears, Harvard, Mass., photo courtesy Old Print Shop*



Fig. 4. Alvan Fisher: Bellows Falls, Vermont. Signed and dated 1817

*William H. Vodrey, Liverpool, Ohio, photo courtesy Old Print Shop*

the author said, "are very beautiful."<sup>5</sup> These copies even impressed John Neal who was writing in 1828 in "The Yankee."<sup>6</sup> The *Portrait of Lydia K. Fisher*, which Fisher painted about 1828, suggests Rembrandt's technique. It is the impasto rendering of the necklace which is the strongest tie with this master and was probably learned from study in the Louvre.<sup>7</sup>

Just as Fisher's technique and composition are reminiscent of the European manner, so is subject matter suggestive of the same painting tradition. The examples to be discussed are closer to England than to the Lowlands. Among the various exhibition catalogues are listed paintings by Fisher of which the titles *Puss in trouble*, *Animal in repose*, *Horse in a breeze*, *Carlo and game*, *Breaking cover*, or *the rat in danger*, *Trio in a kennel*, echo Land-

<sup>5</sup>"North American Review," 1827. Cf the 1830 exhibition at the Boston Athenaeum, especially paintings Nos. 21 and 23.

<sup>6</sup>See Note 2.

<sup>7</sup>Dunlap, W., "A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States," N. Y., 1843 (new edition, Bayley and Goodspeed, Boston, 1918) 33-34. Burroughs, Alan, "A letter from Alvan Fisher," *ART IN AMERICA*; XXXII (1944) 123.



Fig. 5. Alvan Fisher: Watercolor sketch of Niagara Falls in Moonlight  
*Princeton University, Princeton, N. J.*



Fig. 6. John Heaveside: Moonlight Scene, 1807 (watercolor)  
*From "A Practical Essay on the Art of Coloring and Painting Landscapes with Watercolor"*





Fig. 7. Jacob van Ruisdael: Three Oak Trees (etching)  
*Metropolitan Museum of Art*



Fig. 8. Alvan Fisher: Man's Best Friend, 1828-29  
*Robert C. Vose, Boston, Mass.*



Fig. 9. Alvan Fisher: Mountain Scenery with Goats and Travellers. Signed and dated 1840

*Frederick G. Oppenheimer, San Antonio, Texas*

seer and his subject matter.<sup>8</sup> When Fisher travelled to Europe in 1825, Landseer was gaining fame for his animal paintings which carried titles that seem to have inspired Alvan Fisher. More concrete than merely titles are the race-horse portraits (see Fig. 10) which Fisher did for his American clients who had a taste for racing as did their English contemporaries. *The Children of William Ward Stone and their Playmates*, 1833 (Fig. 11), has an English parallel in *Blindman's Buff*, painted by George Morland (Fig. 12).

The examples of the European tradition in Fisher's style do not preclude an original American aspect. They signify a search, on the artist's part, for

<sup>8</sup>Boston Athenaeum: 1828, no. 92; 1831, nos. 45, 138; 1833, no. 51; 1834, no. 136. Harding's, Boston, 1834, no. 159.



Fig. 10. Alvan Fisher: *American Eclipse*. Signed and dated 1821  
*H. T. Peters, Jr., New York, photo courtesy Old Print Shop*



Fig. 11. Alvan Fisher: *Children of William Ward Stone and their Playmates*. Signed and dated 1833  
*Mrs. Arthur Turnbull, photo courtesy Frick Art Reference Library*





Fig. 12. George Morland: *Blindman's Buff*  
*Detroit Institute of Arts*

a means of expression. He borrowed, as he had need, to supplement his own limited technical skill or experience. Nor should one conclude that Alvan Fisher was unique in allying himself with European tradition by emulating technique, composition and subject matter: it was a sign of the times. Alvan Fisher leaned more heavily than some because he was primarily self-taught, and made use of the ready-made instruction available which had originated in Europe.

## “Scraps” — The Missing Waterhouse

Biography of Gilbert Stuart By MABEL MUNSON SWAN  
*Barrington, Rhode Island*

LACK of documentary material in the form of a diary or letters written by Gilbert Stuart has resulted in there being at present no complete record of the life of this artist, although several excellent books and many magazine articles have supplied new information. Stuart disliked letter writing intensely, and his diary, “Book of Judges,” in which he jotted down many of his own reflections has never been found.

Another important contribution would be the discovery of “Scraps,” pages torn from Benjamin Waterhouse’s diary “Memoranda of Things and Events.” Dr. Benjamin Waterhouse was a boyhood friend of Stuart in Newport, continued this friendship in London and many years later entertained him at his home in Cambridge, Mass., where Waterhouse was then living. He referred to Stuart’s “Book of Judges” in his own “Memoranda of Things and Events” when he recorded:

The first day of March, 1840, and I alive and well in health as at any first of March I can remember. My old companion of my boyhood Gilbert (Charles) Stewart, an uncommonly sagacious young man as it regarded the human person, the painting of which was his forte or glory, used to predict as he told me after he found that his predictions failed and derided his judgment, he had put it down in his Book of Judges that Ben Waterhouse would never rise over thirty years of age but go down to the grave like all his brothers and sisters before they were full grown. But Gibby was mistaken for I am here now March 1, 1840 able to write five and sometimes six hours a day.

For many years search has continued unsuccessfully for information leading to the recovery of “Scraps,” the missing Waterhouse biography of Stuart which is known to have been in 1833 in the possession of James Herring who with James Barton Longacre published the “National Portrait Gallery.”

At that time the versatile William Dunlap, dramatist, theatrical manager, painter, critic, novelist and historian had just completed a “History of the Theatre” and was gathering material for a “History of the Arts of Design in the United States.” The latter which is often criticised for some untrustworthy accounts, is nevertheless a valuable record in some respects,

as Dunlap's material was obtained by countless letters written by him to contemporary artists whose replies formed the ground work of his book. From many of these he received accounts of their personal knowledge of Stuart in whom the public was still greatly interested although he had been dead nearly five years.

In December 1832, Dunlap recorded in his diary, "I yesterday rec'd from Chas. Fraser of Charleston, manuscript notices of Stuart." Three months later he added, "The Proprietor of the Knickerbacker Magazine (G. Morris) engages me to write a brief sketch of Stuart." This was published in the Magazine in April 1833, and although it furnished anecdotes about Stuart the dates of his birth and death were incorrect.

Still seeking further material about Stuart presumably for his "History of the Arts of Design," Dunlap wrote to Henry Sargent a young artist in Boston, asking for information about himself as well as of Stuart. Although Henry Sargent had known Stuart in 1806 when Stuart first came to Boston, he had no information to give Dunlap, but referred him to Dr. Benjamin Waterhouse who was then living in Cambridge, Mass.

Later when the busy Doctor failed to reply to Dunlap's letter, Sargent offered to call personally on the Doctor to try to obtain some information for Dunlap.

On August 30, 1833 James Herring called on Dunlap ostensibly to give him some information about Trumbull for his forthcoming book, but in reality to ask Dunlap to write a biographical sketch of Stuart for the "National Portrait Gallery," and to offer the loan of a biographical sketch of Stuart that Waterhouse had given him — the information which Dunlap had long been seeking. You can imagine the readiness with which Dunlap agreed to write this sketch. His diary records:

Friday Sept 6. Ride to James Herrings. Examine Dr. Waterhouse's communication respecting Stuart. Notice curious and gross errors in the Encyclopedia Am. I am agreed to furnish a biography of Stuart bring home Waterhouse M S S and more of Trumbull.

On the following Monday (Sept 9) Dunlap commenced his biographical sketch of Stuart for Herring. But in his diary he did not refer to the material which Herring had loaned him as "Scraps" until the following day when he wrote that Herring had again called on him leaving with him "Scraps," which had been sent back to Waterhouse and returned with further additions respecting Stuart.

Dunlap completed this biographical sketch of Stuart in two days but

for some unaccountable reason did not deliver it to Herring until October 24. One month later Nov. 25, 1833 Dunlap received a belated letter from Waterhouse apologising for not having answered Dunlap's letter of the previous May. Dunlap's reaction to this long overdue letter was his comment that it was a rambling affair with repetitions of what Waterhouse had written Herring.

Apparently the shrewd old Doctor suspected or had been told that Herring had loaned "Scraps" to Dunlap, and hoped that a belated answer to Dunlap's letter of six months previous, might recover his papers for him. He wrote in his "Memoranda of Things and Events" on December 30:

A sketch of the life and character of Gilbert Charles Stewart and particulars of my own was lent to Mr James Herring of New York at his urgent request, but has not since been returned to me agreeably to my stipulation, who lent them without my permission to Mr. Dunlap.

It was not surprising that Dr. Waterhouse was concerned over the papers having been loaned to Dunlap for the "particulars of my own" which he had sent to Herring were pages torn from his "Memoranda of Things and Events" by Benjamin Waterhouse.

Many years later, after the death of Benjamin Waterhouse, William Roscoe Thayer of Cambridge to whom Waterhouse's diary had been left, gave an address before the Cambridge Historical Society on this diary. He prefaced his lecture with the remarks:

The earliest date in this diary which has been chopped — I don't know by whom — many pages have been ruthlessly taken out — is 1828. It is a journal in which he jots down his reminiscences, the events of the day, reflections and memoranda.

Dr. Thayer apparently did not know that these pages "so ruthlessly taken out," as he said, had been torn out by Waterhouse himself and comprised "Scraps," which had been sent to Herring to add to the sketch which Waterhouse had previously sent him. They were the "particulars of my own" whose loss Waterhouse bemoaned, and in all probability contained the most interesting of his recollections concerning Stuart. Throughout Waterhouse's "Memoranda of Things and Events" are frequent references to Stuart similar to the following:

March 1st 1839. My old companion Gilbert Charles Stewart who was a very eminent painter was a good judge of the human frame, used to say before he and I were twenty years of age for we were both born the same year that I would never rise thirty years because I was of a delicate frame and incapable of so much muscular fatigue as himself as he is of an elastic fiber, firm and of a very inflexible will and as I once thought of a stronger

mind than myself, but I have found the truth of the sacred text "The race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong." Gilbert Stewart has been in his grave nearly ten years! And I can do almost everything as usual.

Throughout his many references to Stuart in his "Memoranda of Things and Events," Waterhouse shows his deep affection for his old friend.

Sept 5, 1842. I think that were I to see drawn up a regiment of Americans and another of Englishmen I could easily distinguish one from another by the complexion, the Briton being in most cases the fairest, but mistakes would occur. My old and accurate friend Gilbert Stewart imagined that he hardly ever mistook them. His own father was Scotch and his mother American. He himself would pass for a Briton on either side the Atlantic. His father was of Glasgow in Scotland, his mother of Narragansett.

A most interesting and valuable diary, Waterhouse's "Memoranda of Things and Events," but the most valuable of all in his opinion was "Scraps," the pages which he tore from this book to add to the biographical sketch which he had sent to Herring with the stipulation that it was not to be loaned. The old saying — A book loaned is never returned — is undoubtedly true in most cases.

A search of the Dunlap papers has disclosed no trace of "Scraps," and the probability is that these pages were destroyed with countless other material after Dunlap had utilized the information for his forthcoming book.



### THREE BOOKS ON FOLK ART

EDWARD HICKS, PAINTER OF THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM. By Alice Ford. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1952. 161 pp., illustrated, \$8.50.

This is the first major publication on the Quaker preacher and painter Edward Hicks. It is therefore a book of real importance, and it is a very good one.

The illustrations are well selected, which is especially important with the number of dubious Hicks paintings to be found today. The color plates are unusually true. The text is factual, simply written, unpretentious but scholarly in the best sense of the word. The greatest possible use is made of original source material, here first published, giving full authenticity to the story of Hicks' life, and documenting his work.

There are a few disconcerting errors. For instance, the color plate of the important *Peaceable Kingdom* used for the jacket is captioned c. 1830, but is dated in the descriptive list as c. 1840-45. The 1830 date, one might note, is closer to the correct one. However, the full plate descriptions, good text, simple and usable index, and excellent all-over planning and design, make this a highly satisfactory book.

EARLY AMERICAN WOOD CARVING. By Erwin O. Christensen. World Publishing Co., 1952. 149 pp., illustrated, \$4.00.

This volume, according to the preface "aims to give the reader a broad view of early American wood carving in the United States from Colonial days to the end of the nineteenth century." It does just that, with illustrations from the Index of American Design. Its material is well organized, clearly written, well illustrated.

CIGAR STORE FIGURES IN AMERICAN FOLK ART. By A. W. Pendergast and W. Porter Ware. Lightner Publishing Corp., 1953. 76 pp., illustrated, \$2.50.

The content of this book — text and illustration — is a real contribution by a couple of experts. It is stuffed with interesting tidbits about how cigar store figures originated, were made, sold, and finally collected as folk art. The writing is lively, and as unpretentious and direct in appeal as the material it deals with.

The only criticism is a somewhat too casual treatment of the book as a whole, and many of its details. Plates combine groups of mounted snapshots, newspaper photos, and museum-type photographs of individual pieces. Though there are many hundreds of cigar store figures worthy of reproduction, several are shown twice in different settings, a large number have been reproduced in other publications, and several carved figures not of cigar store origin are shown. There are two authors for this book, but the frontispiece is captioned "collection of the author." With two authors and a publisher at work the book might have been less hit-or-miss in effect. But it is a readable, inexpensive and basic addition to the field, so we won't heckle the authors because they took a bit too little time to trim and shape their material.

— J. L.